



MINUTES

New Iowans Study Committee Public Hearing

September 26, 2005

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Joe Bolkcom,
Co-chairperson
Senator Paul McKinley,
Co-chairperson
Senator James Hahn
Senator Jack Hatch
Senator Matt McCoy

Representative Mary Lou Freeman,
Co-chairperson
Representative Debra Berry
Representative George Eichhorn
Representative Wayne Ford
Representative Jodi Tymeson

MEETING IN BRIEF

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- I. Procedural Business.
- II. Invited Speakers.
- III. Public Comments.



New Iowans Study Committee Public Hearing

I. Procedural Business.

The first public hearing of the New Iowans Study Committee was called to order by Temporary Co-chairperson Senator Joe Bolkcom at 6:06 p.m., Monday, September 26, 2005. The first public hearing was held at East High School in Des Moines, Iowa. The public hearing ended at 8:04 p.m.

II. Invited Speakers.

Mr. Bob Skow, Independent Insurance Agents of Iowa. A legitimate driver's license is needed for the insurance industry to issue an automobile insurance policy. While the insurance industry has no official position on whether to issue driver's licenses to noncitizens, if a noncitizen was issued a driver's license, the industry would issue that person a policy.

Mr. Brendan Comito, Chief Operating Officer, Capital City Fruit. New immigrants are important to Iowa and the Iowa economy. Much of the population growth in this state is from new Iowans and Iowa's economy cannot grow without workers. Capital City Fruit is a distributor and repacker of fresh fruits and vegetables and immigrants and refugees make up 40 percent of the company workforce. Capital City provides these immigrants with on-site English as a second language (ESL) classes and also provides English-speaking employees with on-site Spanish speaking classes. The greatest need is to provide ESL classes to these new immigrants. In addition, many of these immigrants and refugees need assistance with health care and housing. Ultimately, the key is for Iowans to accept and welcome these new immigrants.

Sergeant Joe Gonzalez, Hispanic Outreach, Des Moines Police Department. The Des Moines Police Department Police Chief is in favor of issuing driver's licenses to undocumented residents. The police do not want to act as immigration agents but they need a way to identify individuals and other forms of identification are not ideal. The Des Moines Police Department has a division within the department, the Hispanic Outreach Neighborhood Resource Advocate Unit (HONRA), which provides a primary contact within the police department as it pertains to the Latino population.

Ms. Barbara Bobb, New Iowan Centers, Iowa Workforce Development. New Iowan Centers have been established within the Iowa Workforce Development Department since 2000. Currently, there are centers in Muscatine, Sioux City, and Ottumwa. Pursuant to a recent federal grant, additional New Iowan Centers will be established in Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Council Bluffs. The New Iowan Centers provide one-stop workforce development services for new Iowans and are designed to support workers, businesses, and communities with information, community service referrals, job placement, translations, language training, and resettlement assistance, as well as technical and legal assistance concerning forms and documentation. Through the efforts of these centers, around 7,000 individuals have found employment.



Mr. Lorenzo Jasso, Principal, McKinley School, Des Moines. Supporting educational opportunities for children and new lowans is critical. New lowans are not a drain on state resources but are good for the state and its economy. The children of new lowans are the future leaders of this state. An increase in minority teachers is needed to assist new lowans.

Dr. Jose Angel, La Clinica Medica de Des Moines. Dr. Angel operates a clinic through Mercy Clinics to provide health care services to new lowans. Around 700 patients have been seen by the clinic during the last six months. New lowans tend to come as families and need health care. Health care for children is needed yet cheap and every effort needs to be made to enroll eligible children in the hawk-i program.

Mr. Terry Dillinger, Office of Driver Services Director, Iowa Department of Transportation. The requirements for receiving a driver's license are two forms of identification and proof of a social security number or alternative document number. A foreign national here on a short-term basis can receive a driver's license for the time they are here, or up to two years. However, issuing this driver's license is only allowable for documented aliens and undocumented aliens are not eligible based on current Iowa law. The office could issue a driving certificate as an alternative to a driver's license. However, it could only be issued to undocumented residents if state law is changed.

Mr. Daniel Lock – Sudanese. Iowa has several thousand Sudanese. Members of the Sudanese community need Iowa's support to bridge the cultural and language gap. ESL courses are critical and low-income housing assistance is needed so that the Sudanese in Iowa can remain in Iowa.

Ms. Tomasa Fonseca – Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (ICCI) – Marshalltown. Just and fair job opportunities for all lowans are needed. A worker at the Swift and Company meatpacking plant in Marshalltown was injured and the worker and his wife were unfairly fired. A statement concerning the incident was submitted to the Committee. Iowa needs a meatpacking bill of rights similar to a law passed in Nebraska.

III. Public Comments.

Swift and Company Issue. Two individuals addressed the committee concerning the situation at Swift and Company meatpacking plant in Marshalltown. The individuals stated that the workers were fired for speaking out regarding the abuses at the meatpacking plant.

Mr. Jose Ramos – El Latino Newspaper Owner. The dreams of Latinos in this state are to make a better life for them and their children. Unfortunately, students without social security numbers have enormous barriers that prohibit them from attending university and pursuing professional careers. They are forced to pay out-of-state tuition even if they have lived in Iowa for most of their lives and graduated from an Iowa high school. Iowa needs to pass a law to allow these students to attend Iowa universities and pay in-state tuition.



New Iowans Study Committee Public Hearing

Mr. Alex Orozco – Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking. Human trafficking is a growing problem worldwide. Human trafficking needs to be criminalized. Without a law, there is no crime.

Ms. Cotrena Ussin – Hurricane Katrina Evacuee. Individuals in Iowa as a result of Hurricane Katrina are in need of housing and a one-stop center for evacuees would be helpful. Communication issues have led to missed appointments and other problems.

Chief Dan Brickner – City of Perry. The City of Perry has seen tremendous growth in the Hispanic population and the community has worked hard to make Perry a great place for everyone. A key need is the recruitment and retention of Hispanic police officers. Even if an officer is recruited, it is difficult for small towns to keep them.

Pedro – ICCI. Undocumented residents need a driver's license to obtain car insurance and to not have to hide from the police. Immigrant workers need to be protected.

Jesus – ICCI. Children of undocumented residents are unable to attend college without a social security number. These children did not choose to come here and should not be punished based upon the decision of their parents to seek a better life in this country. The development of Hispanic professionals in this state needs to be encouraged by allowing them to attend college.

Mr. Ken Sagar – Iowa Federation of Labor. Immigrants built America and these newer immigrants are the same. Worker rights need to be respected and the exploitation of immigrants by corporations needs to be prevented. Immigration laws need to be reformed and enforced. However, guest worker statutes should not be enacted. Iowa's New Iowan Centers have been successful and state funding for these centers needs to continue.

Ms. Pamela Valero – Iowa Public Health Association. A strong public health system is needed for new Iowans. The following are initiatives the association wants the General Assembly to consider and support:

- Address issues affecting health and human rights of new Iowans.
- Improve access to health care for new Iowans.
- Support providing health information in the native languages of new Iowans.
- Mandatory cultural competency training for health providers.
- Employers should provide greater financial support to help pay for job-related injuries, medical interpreters, and other needs of health organizations that serve new Iowa workers.
 - Recruit, train, and retain health care professionals in Iowa, especially those who are minorities.
 - Adopt the approach used in the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act in Iowa to allow children of undocumented residents to qualify for in-state tuition.



- Expand programs for low-cost preventative and medical services for high-risk new Iowans, such as the young and elderly.
- Recruit, train, and retain qualified medical interpreters in the state.
- Strengthen and expand the Office of Multicultural Health within the Iowa Department of Public Health.

Mr. Kirk Martin – Capitol Hill Neighborhood Association. Many new Iowans reside in the neighborhood around East High School and this diversity is attractive to native Iowans.

Mr. Walter Reed, Jr. – Iowa Department of Human Rights. The department has seven divisions. The goal of the department is to promote the well-being and improve the quality of life for unique and diverse populations in Iowa.

Ms. Dora Seden – A Metropolitan Organizing Strategy (AMOS). New Iowans want to be treated the same as everyone else. They want to drive the streets and to obtain insurance.

Mr. Juana Cortes. New Iowans need driver's licenses and car insurance.

Ms. Judy Kading – Marshalltown Middle School. Diverse faculty and ESL teachers are needed. Federal immigration law reform is needed to legalize those persons being educated.

Mr. Adan Aguilera. The inability to obtain a driver's license and car insurance is a problem for undocumented new Iowans. The ability to go to Mexico when parents or other loved ones die and to then return to the United States without difficulty would be nice.

Mr. Rick Kidder. Latinos need social security numbers and driver's licenses. These Latinos need to be helped and treated like all Iowans are treated.

Mr. Eddie Morrow – St. Anthony Catholic Church – AMOS. New Iowans face many challenges, including issues relating to education, jobs, health care, public safety, and human trafficking. The challenge for Iowans is to accept these new Iowans and recognize the significant contributions they make to this state and nation. These new Iowans are fighting for this country and pay taxes in an amount that far exceeds the governmental benefits and services they receive. Legislation needs to be passed that will better recognize these new Iowans.

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